

# THE NEW MEXICO COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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## ***What is the Court Improvement Project (CIP)?***

The State Court Improvement Program (CIP) was created as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1993. The Act provides Federal funds to State child welfare agencies and Tribes for preventive services and services to families at risk or in crisis. Funds are also provided to enhance the court's role in achieving stable, permanent homes for children in foster care. Since 1995, the New Mexico Supreme Court has received a grant from the Children's Bureau to accomplish this purpose.

## ***What is the Court improvement Project's Mission and Vision?***

The **mission** of the New Mexico Court Improvement Project is to develop innovative approaches that advance court, agency, and stakeholder collaboration in improving the safety, permanency, and well being of children and families in the child welfare system.

We **envision** seamless systems that are committed to safe, healthy, and thriving children and families in New Mexico.

## ***What is the Children's Court improvement Commission (CCIC)?***

The Chief Justice of the NM Supreme Court appoints a broadly based Commission to coordinate the project. This Commission includes judges, legislators, representatives from Protective Services and Juvenile Justice (Children, Youth and Families Department), attorneys, child and family advocates, educators, service providers, foster parents, youth, and other interested parties. The participants in the Court Improvement Project form a strong coalition collaborating to improve New Mexico's child welfare system.

## ***What are the initiatives of the Court Improvement Project?***

The direction of the CIP nationally and in New Mexico is to adopt a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) approach, focusing on measureable outcomes and logic models to develop effective innovations and interventions. Our strategic plan calls for improving the timeliness and quality of hearings, reducing attorney and judicial caseloads, enhancing the quality of legal representation, and using computer technology and management information systems more efficiently and effectively.

***What are some accomplishments of the Court Improvement Project?***

- ◆ Implementation of expedited time frames in abuse & neglect proceedings in the Children's Code
- ◆ Implementation of Permanency Hearings and mandatory pre-adjudicatory and pre-permanency hearing meetings
- ◆ Development and implementation of Mediation services in Abuse and Neglect Cases
- ◆ Development and support of the Kinship Guardianship Act
- ◆ Establishment of the Corinne Wolfe Children's Law Center
- ◆ Extensive training and cross-training on multiple topics through the Children's Law Center
- ◆ Assignment of Youth Attorneys for youth 14 years and older
- ◆ Development of model contracts and Supreme Court promulgated performance standards for court-appointed attorneys
- ◆ Establishment of the Tribal-State Judicial Consortium
- ◆ Collaboration on Preserving Connections, Open Adoptions, and other cross-agency initiatives
- ◆ Management and facilitation of Annual Children's Law Institute conferences
- ◆ Development of measures of timeliness of court hearings

***Where can I learn more about the Court Improvement Project?***

The New Mexico Court Improvement Project maintains a website with information about the project and links to related projects. CIP also writes and publishes a number of Best Practice Bulletins and Information Booklets for youth, foster parents, biological parents, judges, attorneys, social workers, clinicians, child advocates, and others who work with children and families. Go to:

<http://www.nmcourts.gov/CourtImprovement/>

***How can I get involved with the Court Improvement Project?***

There are many opportunities to participate in workgroups and other activities that have been established to carry out CIP initiatives. If you would like more information about CIP or would like to join one of the workgroups, please contact:

Angela Peinado, Statewide CIP Manager, at [aocaxp@nmcourts.gov](mailto:aocaxp@nmcourts.gov).